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THE THUNDERBIRD MOTIF IN NORTHEASTERN INDIAN ART

Edward J. Lenik

Thunderbird figures and images are found in American Indian art throughout Canada and the United States. In the legends of Algonkian and Iroquoian peoples of the Northeast region the thunderbird is a powerful and sacred spirit-being in the form of a giant eagle-like bird. It causes lightning, thunder, wind, devours serpents, and is seen as a guardian spirit of Indian people.

In southeastern Canada and the northeastern United States, or the Northeast, the thunderbird image is found in various design forms and artistic mediums. It has been expressed on rock surfaces, in shell, clay, animal hide, metal, and as facial tattoos. Images occur on bedrock outcrops located along the banks of rivers and streams, the shores of lakes, and seaside bays. Thunderbird images have been engraved into artifacts including ornaments, small flat stones, a stone pipe, and pebbles. Thunderbirds appear in the archaeological record as copper cutouts, castings in pewter and lead, fashioned from shell and incised into clay. These various images are illustrated and described and an interpretation of their meaning and age is presented.

THE THUNDERBIRD IN NATIVE AMERICAN CULTURE

In the legends of Native Algonkian and Iroquoian peoples of the Northeast region, the thunderbird is an extremely powerful spirit in the form of a giant eagle-like bird with the ability to change into a human. This sacred creature causes lightning by flashing its eyes, thunder by beating its wings, and wind by its rapid flight through the sky. It lives in the sky and devours serpents. The thunderbird, a spirit of the sky, protects Indian people against the Great Horned Serpent of the underworld (Chamberlain 1890:51-52; Wintemberg 1924:39, 40; Vastokas and Vastokas 1973:91; Smith 1995:76-77).

Commonly portrayed with outstretched wings, a forked tail, and its head in profile, the thunderbird image is found in various design forms and artistic mediums. Occasionally, lines resembling feathers extend down from the wings; these are believed to represent power lines. It also appears with its wings "at rest" along its body, its head facing forward, presenting an X-shaped body. The thunderbird image has been found in American Indian art throughout Canada and the United States.

In this paper I focus on artifacts bearing the thunderbird design motif found in eastern Canada and the northeastern United States, or the Northeast. First, I examine a few surviving legends of the thunderbird and attempt to explain the association of this traditional spirit-being and its portrayal by and meaning to Indian people. The presence of the thunderbird image on rock surfaces and artifacts may have served as a source of power and as a protection against evil forces for individual owners and for groups.

MYTHS AND LEGENDS OF THE THUNDERBIRD

The Mi´kmaq Indians once occupied much of Atlantic Canada including what is now portions of the Gaspe Peninsula of Quebec, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, and northern and eastern New Brunswick (Bock 1978:109-110). Myths and legends were an important part of their oral history. Their stories told of supernatural beings that occupied their land, evoking fear and awe. These tales explained their physical world. One such legend was that of "Kaktoogwak," a Thunder Being, a story retold by Marion Robertson (1973) as follows:

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> Kaktoogwak, his wife and their son Kaktoogwasees, Little Thunder, lived in the woods. Young Thunder's adventures in his long search for a bride accompanied by other supernatural beings, Pine Chopper, Windblower, and Swift Foot, kicked up many a whirlwind in the old land of the Micmacs (Mi´kmaqs). As well as Old Thunder and Young Thunder there were six Thunder Boys who, as birds, flew high in the sky and made rain, thunder and lightning.

In 1884 noted folklorist Charles G. Leland recorded several Thunder stories of the Passamaquoddy Indians of northern Maine. In one tale told to him by Tomah Joseph, an Indian went hunting and after traveling several days he came to the base of Mount Katahdin (Leland 1992:259-261). He went up the mountain where he met a beautiful girl, a "powerful m`te´oulin," a person who had "great magic power." Soon they came to a "great cavern" which they entered where they found an "old man seated by a fire." The old man asked his daughter whether she heard anything of her brothers and after looking and listening several times outside the cavern, she replied "No." Soon the brothers appeared at the entrance to the cavern along with a crash of thunder and a flash of lightning. The two men were beautiful giants, stupendous, with an awful look or bearing. Their eyebrows were made of stone and "their cheeks were as rocks." The Indian hunter was told that they flew out every few days and if they saw anything that was harmful to their friends, they were to strike. Thus, Mount Katahdin was the home of Lightning and Thunder and "when the thunder strikes the brothers are shooting at the enemies of their friends." The Indian hunter then returned home and discovered he had been gone seven years.

In another story of the "old time," a Passamaquoddy Indian was lifted up by roaring wind during a thunderstorm and set down in the village of the Thunders (Leland 1992:263-266). Here, he described the Thunders as human-like beings who had wings and used bows and arrows. These wings could be removed, but from time to time the chief of the Thunders told them to put them on and fly away. They were warned not to fly too low for if they were caught in the trees they would die. The Passamaquoddy Indian was transformed into a Thunder, given a pair of wings and was made to fly with the rest of the Thunders. The rumble of the thunder was the sound of their wings. They always flew southward where they tried, always unsuccessfully, to kill a great storm bird called Wochowsen. After a time, the Indian wished to return home to his family on earth. Upon his return, he told the other Indians he had been in the Thunder-world and this is why they believe that thunder and lightning are caused by spirit beings.

In 1892, an old Penobscot woman of Old Town, Maine related the story of Grandfather Thunder to Abby L. Alger (1897:15-18). "Thunder is our Grandfather," she said. During the first roll of thunder in the spring, the Indians build a fire out in the open, throw some tobacco on it to give "Grandfather a smoke." This was done in gratitude to Grandfather Thunder who saved an Indian girl from "Wi-will-mecq – a loathy worm." Grandfather Thunder had three sons, one cruel and two kind and gentle, who "cool hot air, revive parched fields and destroy only that which is harmful to the earth." The woman also said that Lightning was Grandfather's wife. Another informant, Louis Mitchell, confirmed the story related above and added some additional details: The tobacco was "cast" into a fire in a ring which created "a beautiful blue circle of flickering flames." Furthermore, lightning never injured an Indian or Indian property.

A similar tale was recorded by anthropologist Mark R. Harrington (1921:29-30). The Lenape Indians of New Jersey and adjacent areas told him that the Thunder Beings were responsible for watering the earth and protecting Indian People against the Great Horned Water Monsters. The Thunder Beings were described as anthropomorphic beings with wings who carry bows and arrows. Some people burn tobacco and pray to these spirits when the first rumble of thunder is heard in the Spring. It was said that "lightning never used to strike an Indian or destroy Indian property."

In 1909, anthropologist Frank G. Speck wrote that the Mohegan, Pequot, and Niantic Indians of Connecticut were "among the first to come into contact with European settlers" and therefore "nothing systematic or thorough regarding native life was recorded by the early colonists" (Speck 1909:183). Speck further observed "that the whole cultural structure of the southern New England tribes has now been lost, and only a few artifacts and folk-beliefs remaining here and there." Nevertheless, several early twentieth-century

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scholar-ethnographers and more recent ones have researched and documented the lifeways, language, myths and legends (see for example Williams 1936 [1643]; Stiles 1916; Simmons 1986; Benes 1993; Johnson 1995; Bragdon 1996).

Yet, notwithstanding his claim cited above, Speck (1909:203) recorded the following fragmentary story undoubtedly referring to a thunderbird told to him by Fidelia A.H. Fielding, a Mohegan Indian: "A certain kind of cry in the woods at night is made, it is said, by the devil's bird. The bird makes its cry in one place and then goes on to another for awhile. The sounds are said to resemble those made by owls but need not be confused with them. The same bird is thought to have something to do with thunder."

In the early 1950s Jim Thompson, a Delaware Indian living in Washington County, Oklahoma, related the following Thunder myth. The Lenape-Delaware Indians formerly lived in New Jersey, southeastern New York, eastern Pennsylvania and northern Delaware. The thunderbirds, he said, make soup out of old bones. These birds could jump down out of low lying clouds or when fog or mist was present (Newcomb, Jr. 1956:73-74). In olden times, there was an Indian who said he could go and live with the thunder beings. However, Indian people were skeptical of this claim because he did not have wings. One day he built a fire on top of a big round rock that was situated on a bluff overlooking a creek. When the rock was heated to a red hot temperature, he pushed it over the bluff into the water creating steam. The Indian then stepped into the steam and disappeared. Later he returned from the sky.

James Wolf, a Munsee-speaking Lenape/Delaware Indian, tells another Thunder Being legend. The Munsee-Lenape people believe them to be "gigantic partridges although really persons," who once lived in the Niagara gorge beneath the falls. They sometimes came out in the form of a rising cloud with flashes of lightning (Harrington 1921:30).

Iroquois myths and legends also speak of thunderbirds. In a Seneca legend, a thunderbird who lived in a cave behind the cascading water of Niagara Falls battled and defeated a giant snake. As the snake's body drifted down the Niagara River, it came to the falls where it became wedged among the rocks where it formed the Horseshoe Falls (Gridley 1939:86-87; Bender 2003:37(1):4).

In another Iroquois tale, Gun-no-do-yah, the son of a chief, found and challenged a horned snake monster in Lake Ontario. Gun-no-do-yah tried to shoot and kill the creature with his bow and arrows but was unsuccessful. One day, he was seized by the monster and taken down to the bottom of the lake. He-no, a thunderbird and mortal enemy of the serpent, sent his warriors to find the serpent. They found the monster sleeping in a deep cave under the water and brought him to He-no the thunderbird, who killed it and removed the still-living Gun-no-do-yah from its body (Converse 1908:42-45).

THUNDERBIRD PETROGLYPHS AND PICTOGRAPHS ON NON-PORTABLE ROCK

Nova Scotia

Rock drawings produced by Mi´kmaq people are found in great abundance on the shores of Kejimkujik Lake, Nova Scotia, Canada. There are more than five hundred glyphs incised into large reddish-brown slate outcrops on the shore of the lake. The glyphs are fine-line engravings and provide a detailed record of Mi´kmaq culture and lifeways over several centuries (Lenik 2002:19-20). They were first recorded by George Creed, a local postmaster, who produced detail drawings of the carvings. In 1893, Garrick Mallery of the Bureau of American Ethnology at the Smithsonian Institute published some of George Creed's work in his book, *Picture Writing of the American Indians.*

Among the numerous images carved into the rock outcrops at Kejimkujik Lake is one identified by Mallery (1893:487) as a "Micmac thunderbird." Drawn by George Creed (Figure 1), it is an unusual portrayal of the thunderbird. Here we see two trian-

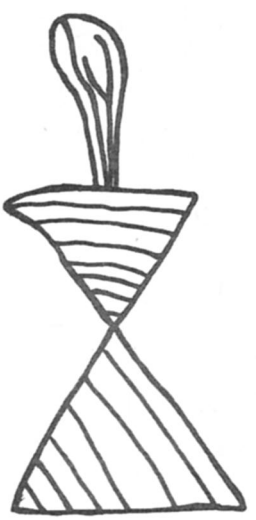

Figure 1 (right). Mi´kmaq thunderbird at Kejimkujik Lake, Nova Scotia. Drawing by George Creed 1887-1888. Source: Robertson 1973.

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gles joined at their apex forming the body of the bird. The interior of the upper body contains parallel horizontal lines, and parallel diagonal lines on the lower body section. It has a long neck and its head is somewhat rounded and turned slightly to the bird's right. Vertical lines extend up through the neck to the top of the head. No arms or feet are depicted. The glyph measures 9.5 centimeters (3¾ inches) in length.

Marion Robertson (1973:Figure 1, n.p.) of the Nova Scotia Museum reproduced George Creed's drawing in her book, *Rock Drawings of the Micmac Indians*. She identifies this thunderbird image as the supernatural being called "Kaktoogwak" or "Thunder."

There are 33 snake and snake-like images and two figures of Jipijka´m, a horned serpent who was said to live underwater incised into the slate outcrops on the shores of the lake. These glyphs suggest that the Indians were fearful of spirits who lived underwater and that they must be shown respect. Perhaps the thunderbird glyph was carved in an attempt to counteract or guard against these potentially dangerous and powerful spirits.

The unique rock outcrops with their polished surfaces and reddish-brown color on the Kejimkujik lakeshore and the images of supernatural beings suggests this area was a sacred and powerful place.

Ontario

The Peterborough Petroglyph site in Ontario, Canada contains hundreds of engraved images of anthropomorphs, animals, birds, reptiles, snakes, boats, supernatural beings and abstract designs. These petroglyphs are pecked and ground into a large outcrop of white crystalline limestone which is criss-crossed by several seams and crevices. An underground stream was once present beneath the largest and deepest of the crevices (Vastokas 2004:280; Vastokas and Vastokas 1973:8, 9). The site is located on the southern edge of the Canadian Shield within Petroglyph Provincial Park.

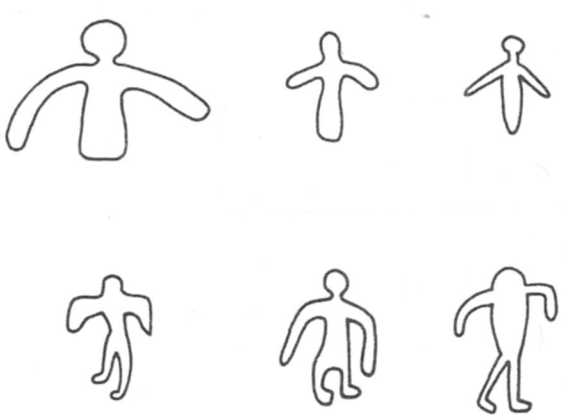

Figure 2. Thunderbirds at the Peterborough Petroglyph site. Source: Vastokas and Vastokas 1973:93.

There are six thunderbird glyphs at the Peterborough Petroglyph site (Figure 2). Three of these glyphs are described as simple, legless images with outstretched wings while three appear as human-like figures with wings (Vastokas and Vastokas 1973:93). There are also 29 serpent glyphs at the site including one Great Horned Serpent and four horned snakes. These serpentine creatures of the underworld seem to emerge from the crevices in the limestone. The juxtaposition of the thunderbird and serpent images suggests a spiritual attempt by the supernatural bird to consume the serpent creatures as they emerge from the cracks in the rock and to guard against the Great Horned Serpent.

Maine

There are five non-portable rock art sites in the State of Maine. Petroglyphs occur on tide-washed rock outcrops at Machias Bay on the northeast coast and inland on rock ledges on Grand Lake Stream and the Kennebec River. Pictographs or paintings have been found and recorded on vertical cliff faces along the shores of an inland lake in southwestern Maine. These rock art sites appear to be the work of spiritual leaders or shamans of Algonquian-speaking peoples who historically occupied this region (Lenik 2002).

Birch Point, also known as Clark's Point, is located on the west side of Machias Bay, Maine. Here a thunderbird glyph is pecked into the north sloping tidal ledge. The image has a triangular body, outstretched wings and feet (Figure 3). Its head, missing a beak, is turned to the bird's left. When I recorded this image in 1976 extensive exfoliation of the rock surface had occurred, resulting in damage to the head, left arm, and the area below its feet (Lenik 2002:50). Another thunderbird glyph is located on a ledge along the shore some

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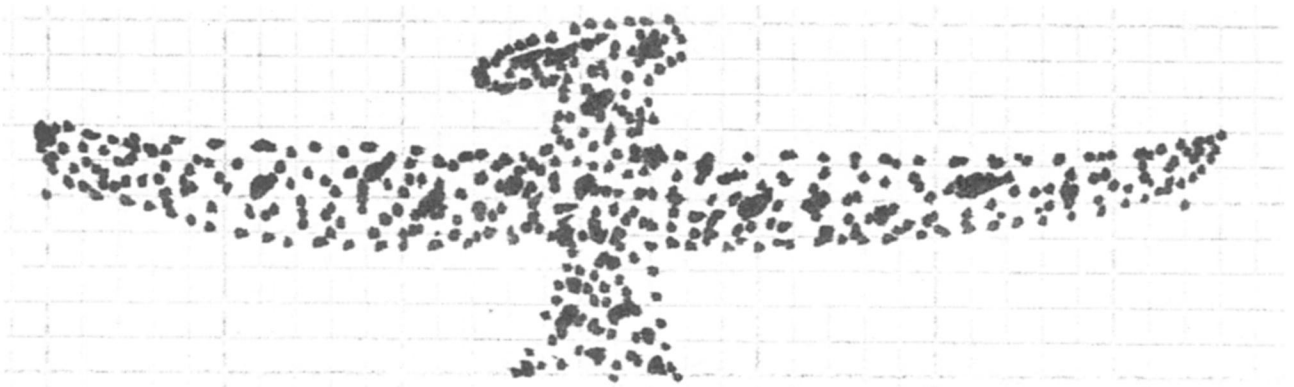

Figure 4. Field sketch of thunderbird petroglyph at Birch Point, Maine. Drawing by E. J. Lenik 1976.

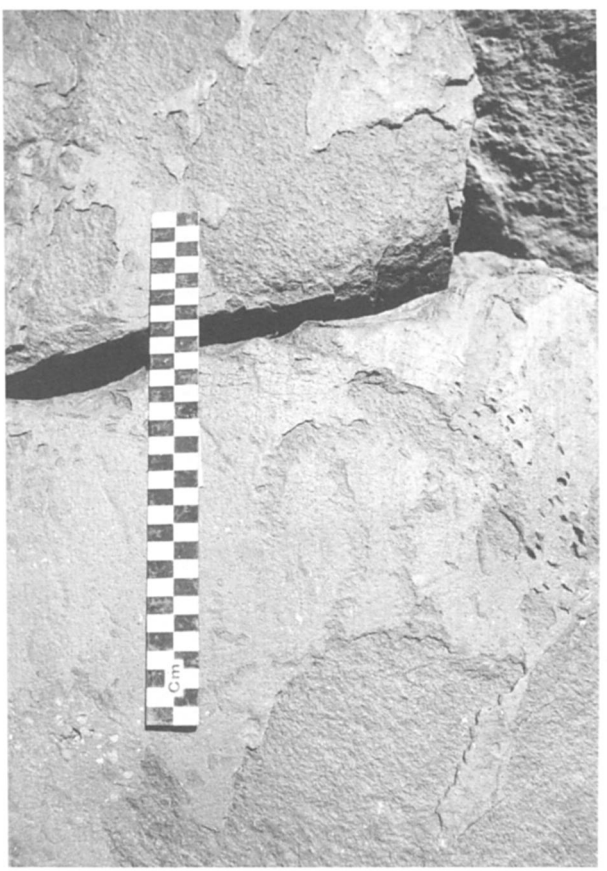

Figure 3. Thunderbird figure at Birch Point, Maine. Photo by E. J. Lenik 1976.

24.5 meters (80.5 feet) south of the principal petroglyph locus referred to as the main ledge (Figure 4). This figure is also pecked into the rock surface and has a horizontal wingspan measuring 40 centimeters (15½ inches). The bird's head is turned to its right and the lower body is triangular in shape (Lenik 1976).

The Embden Petroglyph site is located on the west bank of the Kennebec River in the Town of Embden, Somerset County, Maine. A ledge of bedrock composed of shale extends perpendicularly out into the river and has more than one hundred designs pecked or incised into its south facing surface.

In 1977 Mark Hedden conducted an intensive survey of the Embden petroglyph site for the Maine State Museum. Lahti (Lahti et al. 1981:32; Lenik 2002:52) reported that 13 images appeared to be birdmen with arms curved like wings and some with bead-like heads. Hedden (1996:17-18) stated that these images are "popularly identified as versions of the thunderbird motif, though they may equally well represent powers of flight associated with a specific shaman." Dean Snow (1976:281-288) has suggested that the bird-like figures represent a supernatural creature called Pamola, which the Indians said lived on Mount Katahdin in Maine. Pamola was described as a bird-like flying creature with a huge head and wings, with or without a body, or interchangeably a man. I believe the figures depicted with heads turned to the side, wings extended and legs spread apart represent thunderbirds, the mythical beings (see Figure 5). A serpent is depicted at the eastern edge of the bedrock ledge.

Grand Lake Stream is both a watercourse and a town of the same name in Washington County, Maine. Grand Falls or Big Falls is located a short distance below the village. Above the falls on the east side of the stream is a flat, slightly sloping outcrop of bedrock that extends into the stream. In 1988 a number of incised petroglyphs were found on this ledge. Additional glyphs were subsequently discovered on a rock ledge south and downstream from the first location adjacent to the stream itself. The Grand Lake Stream petroglyphs date

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Figure 5. Thunderbird petroglyphs on ledge at Embden, Maine. Drawing courtesy of Mark Hedden.

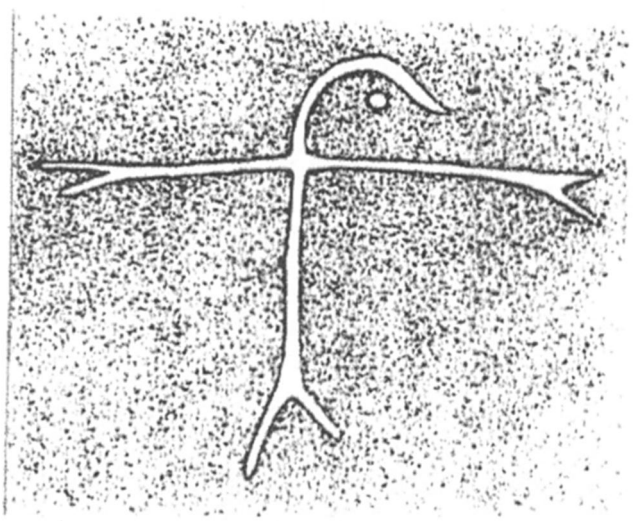

Figure 6. Thunderbird petroglyph at locus 2, Grand Lake Stream, Maine. Drawing by T. Fitzpatrick.

to the mid-nineteenth century and were carved by traditional Passamaquoddy shamans. They represent traditional shamanistic motifs.

At Locus 2, below the falls is an incised image of a thunderbird. It was carved in a stick-figure style with its head turned to the figure's left; it has horizontal outstretched wings and short widespread legs. An eye-dot is present on the head (Figure 6). A pecked image of a snake with a large head and open mouth is located nearby. The snake was carved into the ledge among crevices and holes which suggests that it emerged from the underworld (Ray 1992:27 [1 and 2:4-5]).

Pictographs or paintings on rock surfaces are extremely rare in the Northeast woodlands. None have been reported in Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick, Canada. In all of New England, only two sites have been found and documented, both in the State of Maine. Two pictograph sites have also been found in upstate New York. None have been found in New Jersey, eastern Pennsylvania and Delaware.

An imposing granite ledge rises above the eastern edge of a majestic sky-colored lake in southwestern Maine. Here there are two loci of paintings on the vertical surface of the granite ledge. The Maine State Archaeological Survey number for the pictographs at this lakeside site is 12.28. The remains of three paintings are located on one southwestern face overlooking the water. The designs are unidentifiable with any degree of certainty because the rock surface here is severely weathered and exfoliated. On the south side of the same ledge in a sheltered cove are five or six figures painted in dark red ochre that may represent thunderbirds. This identification is speculative because the images are incomplete due to severe weathering. The paintings at this site were likely produced by Algonkian shamans in an attempt to communicate with spiritual beings.

Vermont

Indian petroglyphs on the south bank of the West River in Brattleboro, Vermont were first recorded in 1794. In 1808, these same glyphs were observed by Edward A. Kendall (1809 III:219) who reported seeing four birds and one dog or wolf. In 1857 Henry R. Schoolcraft also recorded the petroglyphs on the West River. A drawing by Hamlin, Schoolcraft's associate, depicts two sets of figures on a solitary rock: a group of three thunderbirds at the top and a group of two thunderbirds and a quadruped below. Historian Benjamin Hall (1858:589-590) located the "Indian Rock" site in 1858 and described the petroglyphs as consisting of ten figures including six birds. Finally, in the late 1860s photographs were taken of Indian Rock by Professor Edward Hitchcock of Amherst College. One photograph shows a group of three distinct figures: two thunderbirds and a quadruped. This group is identical to the one illustrated in 1857 by Schoolcraft's artist. A second photograph depicts one thunderbird-like figure by itself. The Indian Rock petroglyphs are no longer visible as they lie beneath the water of the river, which was raised by the construction of a hydroelectric dam on the Connecticut River.

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Although the various reports and illustrations differ in the number of glyphs that were present on the rock, I can confidently say that at least six figures were originally pecked into the rock: five thunderbirds and one quadruped (Figure 7). I conclude that the thunderbirds on the West River in Brattleboro represent a shaman's attempt to communicate with these powerful spiritual beings and mark the spot as a sacred place on the river.

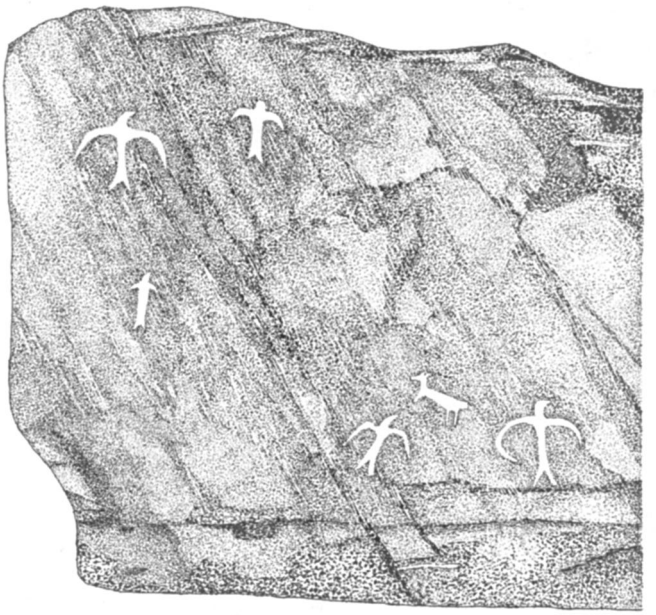

Figure 7. Indian Rock petroglyphs on the West River, Brattleboro, Vermont. Drawing by T. Fitzpatrick.

Massachusetts

The Nemasket River flows northerly from Assawompset Lake in Lakeville, Massachusetts through Middleborough and enters the Taunton River near North Middleborough. In Historic Contact times, several Indian settlements were located along its route and an Indian trail and river ford or crossing were present here. Three petroglyph sites have been recorded along the Nemasket River on Hand Rock, Chestnut Street, and Great Rock in Middleborough (see Lenik 2002:114-120).

In 2007 a large glacially deposited boulder containing a carved image of a thunderbird was discovered along the Nemasket River in Lakeville (Taylor 2008 69(2):65-66). The thunderbird figure was cut deeply into the east vertical face of the boulder which faces the river. It is a stick-figure style image with its head turned to its right, wings widespread and down-turned near each end, a somewhat enlarged body and with widespread feet. An incised straight line is present below the glyph along with another to the bird's right (Figure 8). These lines suggest an attempt was made to frame the figure. I suggest that this figure was carved with metal tools and dates to the Historic Contact period.

Figure 8. The Nemasket River thunderbird, Lakeville, Massachusetts. Photo courtesy of Nancy L. Gibbs, 2011.

A large boulder partially covered by drifting sand is situated on the north shore of Assawompset Lake in Middleborough, Massachusetts. This rock is low-lying with a vertical face on its southerly side. A thunderbird figure is pecked into the vertical face of the rock. Its head is turned to its right, wings are widespread and has a long rounded tail; legs are not depicted (Figure 9). I interpret the figure to be a thunderbird in flight. This interpretation is consistent with Algonkian ideology, with its shamanistic concepts of spiritual flight. The pecked thunderbird represents a shaman's attempt to communicate with spiritual beings and marks the location as a sacred place.

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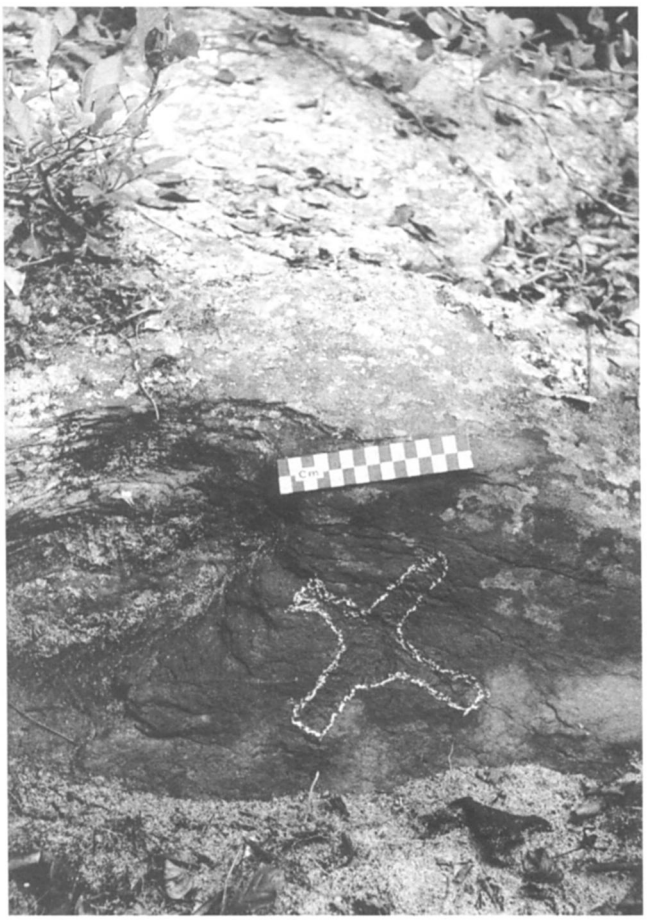

Figure 9. Pecked image of a thunderbird in flight on a boulder on the north shore of Assawompsett Lake, Middleborough, Massachusetts. Photo by E. J. Lenik, 1976.

Pennsylvania

The Susquehanna River extends south from Lake Otsego in Cooperstown, New York through Pennsylvania and Maryland until it enters Chesapeake Bay at Havre de Grace, Maryland. Four concentrations of rock art have been recorded by researchers on the river; on Cresswell Rock and Walnut Island near Washington Boro, Pennsylvania, at Safe Harbor, Pennsylvania and at Bald Friar, Maryland. The Cresswell Rock, Walnut Island and Bald Friar sites are now submerged below the water impounded by hydroelectric power dams. The Safe Harbor petroglyphs are located on seven rock outcrops in the river just below the Safe Harbor dam.

Twenty-one groups of petroglyphs were found and recorded on Walnut Island. These groups totaled more than 200 individual glyphs and cupules. In 1931 archaeologist Donald A. Cadzow of the Pennsylvania Historical Commission removed many of the carvings by drilling them out of the rock and removing them for safekeeping. Pneumatic drills were used to extract individual or groups of figures.

I have examined many of the glyphs that are visible on the rock sections which are now curated at the State Museum of Pennsylvania in Harrisburg. Among the many rock sections from Walnut Island at the museum is one containing two thunderbird images, a spiral, and cup marks. These images were pecked into the rock surface by their creator-artist. The thunderbird glyphs have outstretched drooping wings, feet spread apart, and heads turned to the side (Figure 10).

Donald A. Cadzow (1934) produced a map of Walnut Island depicting the location of the glyphs with 21 "charts" which contained hand-drawn sketches of the figures within each grouping. I have reviewed Cadzow's charts which purport to show the location of the various glyphs. Unfortunately, I am unable to determine the original context and location of the rock section containing the thunderbird glyphs with any degree of confidence.

Figure 10. Section of rock containing two thunderbird figures, a spiral, and cup marks removed from Walnut Island. Photograph courtesy of State Museum of Pennsylvania, Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission.

Three miles below Walnut Island, now submerged, are the petroglyphs at Safe Harbor. They are located on seven rock outcrops lying in

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Figure 11. Pecked thunderbird image associated with a long serpent glyph pecked in outline on Little Indian Rock, Safe Harbor, Pennsylvania. Photo courtesy of Paul Nevin.

Figure 12. Thunderbird with power lines on wings associated with anthropomorphs on Big Indian Rock, Safe Harbor, Pennsylvania. Photo courtesy of Paul Nevin.

shallow water in the Susquehanna River a short distance below the Safe Harbor Dam. In the 1980s local historian Paul Nevin (2004:241-257) rediscovered the carvings, conducted a systematic search of the area, discovered glyphs not previously recorded, and found additional rock outcrops with carvings previously unknown. These loci included the previously documented Big and Little Indian Rocks and newly discovered Footprint Rock, Circle Rock, Eagle Rock, Turkey Rock and Conestoga Rock. Nevin has recorded some 418 images produced by Indians and 110 designs made by Euroamerican visitors to the site.

Among the various design motifs depicted at Safe Harbor are 21 images identified as thunderbirds. These figures occur on five of the rock outcrops located within the river's channel: eight on Big Indian Rock, seven on Little Indian Rock, one on Footprint Rock, one on Circle Rock, and four on Eagle Rock (Nevin 2004:250). These bird-like images are pecked into the rocks. They are depicted with heads turned to the side, wings extended, and legs spread apart.

Here are three examples of thunderbird glyphs at Safe Harbor: One of the thunderbird images carved on Little Indian Rock appears to be associated with a pecked serpent that is 75 centimeters (2½ feet) long (Figure 11). Interestingly, three thunderbird glyphs on Eagle Rock are also associated with a serpent that measures 75 centimeters (2½ feet) long along with a human figure and bird track. Another example is a thunderbird glyph on Big Indian Rock which appears to be associated with anthropomorphic figures (Figure 12). Note that the presence of lines extending down from the wings. Rock art researcher Grace Rajnovich (1994:110) interprets this particular feature as power lines "denoting the knowledge and power given from

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Figure 13. Thunderbird and cupule on Big Indian Rock, Safe Harbor, Pennsylvania. Photo courtesy of Paul Nevin

above to those below." A third example of a thunderbird is found on Big Indian Rock (Figure 13). It has a cupule just below its left wing.

To my knowledge, the 21 thunderbird images at Safe Harbor are the largest concentration of these mythical-being glyphs in the Northeast. Their association with serpents, considered to be creatures of the underworld, as well as the river itself, appears to suggest that the Indians were fearful of spirits who lived underwater.

Rock art researcher Paul Nevin (personal communication, 2010) speculated that "Big Indian Rock was more of a 'public' place for, in addition to being a meeting place, may have been a place where people 'sent messages to the Creator' – hence, individuals being depicted, and Little Indian Rock was more of a private place where people 'received messages from the Creator.'"

In addition to the thunderbird images, Nevin (2004:250) recorded a total of 78 bird tracks at Safe Harbor including 58 on Little Indian Rock alone. Is it possible that these bird tracks may be representations of the thunderbirds' feet? A related Indian tradition recorded in South Dakota in 1883 by Theodore H. Lewis suggests that bird tracks may indeed be those of thunderbirds. Lewis described a granite boulder called "Thunder Bird's Track" located on the summit of a hill in Roberts County. Lewis recorded the following Dakota tradition regarding this rock (Callahan 1997):

> Thunder Bird is said to have had his nest on a high mound, which was composed of sticks and brush, and was situated some 10 miles north-west of the foot of Lake Travers in the center of a deep wide gorge. One day there was a great storm which flooded the whole country. Thunder Bird, in his anger at having been driven from his nest by the rising waters, flew away and alighted on this rock - Wakiyan Oye – which was the only place not covered by water, and left the impression of his feet there. Note: This tradition was apparently gotten up by the Indians to account for the characters on the rock. . .

Lewis further reported that there were six other boulders on the summit of the hill on which "Thunder Bird's Track" was located. These boulders had petroglyphs depicting human hands, cup marks and "probably bird tracks" (Callahan 1997).

THUNDERBIRD IMAGES ON STONE ARTIFACTS

Several artifacts containing representations of thunderbirds have been recovered from archaeological sites in southeastern Ontario, Canada. A tabular fragment of black slate containing two incised thunderbird images was recovered from excavations at the Peace Bridge site in Fort Erie, Ontario (Cooper 2005:65). It was found in association with a cultural feature containing maize that was radiocarbon dated to the late

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seventeenth century. One thunderbird image on the stone is complete and has outstretched and drooping wings, a "fan shaped tail," and a head turned to the side represented by two parallel lines (Figure 14). Below this figure is a second opposing thunderbird, the upper half of which is missing. What remains visible is a forked tail and one downward slanting wing.

A second thunderbird image appears on a slate pendant found on a site in Oxford County, Ontario. This figure is lightly incised on one side and has outstretched wings, a forked tail, and a head turned to the side also comprised of two parallel lines. On either side of the figure are zig-zag lines possibly representing lightning (Cooper 2005:65, 66; Wintemberg 1924: Plate 2, Figures 1 and 2). Zig-zag lines are also present on the reverse side of the pendant.

A third example is a thunderbird image incised into a ground slate bar that was surface collected from a site near Arkona, Ontario. The figure consists of a vertical line representing its body, outstretched and downward pointing wings, and a forked tail (Cooper 2005:65; Wintemberg 1924: Plate 1, Figure 10). The thunderbird image, however, is headless.

A fourth example from Ontario is an incised thunderbird on a banded slate pendant recovered from an Iroquoian village in Elgin County (Cooper 2005: 66-67; Wintemberg 1924: Plate 2, Figure 4). The thunderbird image consists of a vertical line representing its body and horizontal lines forming its wings and tail. Short parallel lines extend down from the wings and tail which may represent power lines or perhaps feathers. The head is turned to the side and consists of two parallel lines (Figure 15).

Five portable petroglyphs, each containing a thunderbird motif, have been found and reported in New England.

A flat piece of slate with an incised decoration on one surface was found in a shell midden at a Pond Island beach on Blue Hill Bay, Maine. The incised design was produced with a sharp stone tool. The image is fragmentary but likely represents a thunderbird. It has a triangular body outline with interior parallel lines joined by short oblique lines and chevrons (Figure 16). Three parallel lines form a V-shaped decoration in the chest area of the figure and remnants of wings are visible at each shoulder that extend obliquely downward (Lenik 2002:71-72). Rock art researcher Mark Hedden (1991 31(1):42) studied the Pond Island stone in detail and concluded that the design on the slate fragment was "an unusually elaborate version of a triangular torso anthropomorph with birdlike attributes...commonly identified as thunderbirds or shamans with special connections to thunderbirds in Algonkian ideology." Hedden notes that the birdlike attributes are consistent with shamanistic beliefs of spiritual out-of-body flight and the function of shamans as intermediaries between the spirit world and humans.

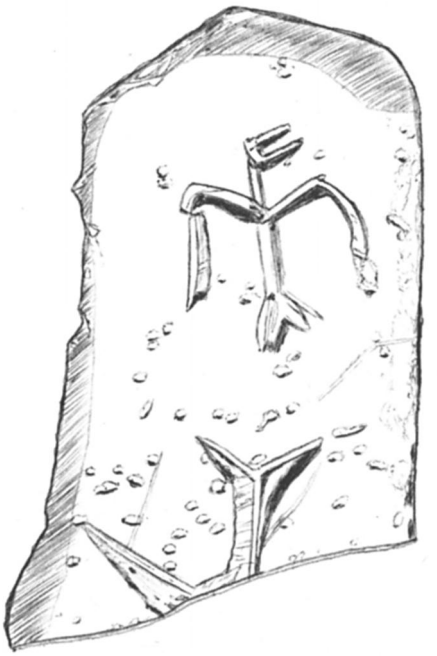

Figure 14. Two thunderbirds on a slate bar from the Peace Bridge site, Fort Erie, Ontario, Canada. Drawing by T. Fitzpatrick after Cooper 2005:65.

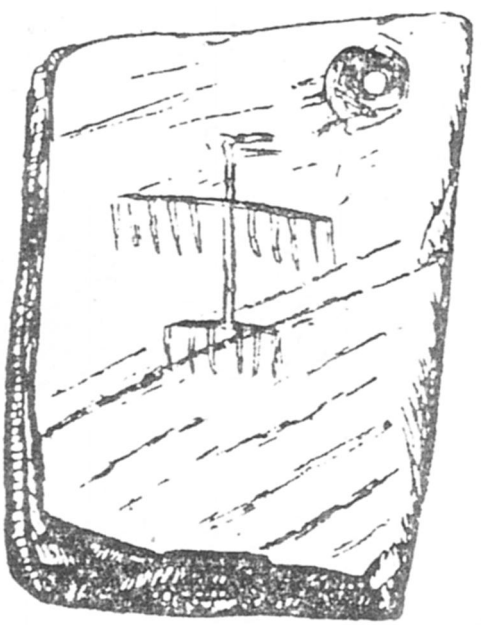

Figure 15. Incised thunderbird on a slate pendant from Elgin County, Ontario. Sources: Wintemberg 1924: plate 2, Figure 4; Cooper 2005:67.

In 1873, a remarkable artifact was recovered from an Early Woodland period cemetery located in Swanton, Vermont. The site contained approximately25 graves along with exotic artifacts and red ochre.

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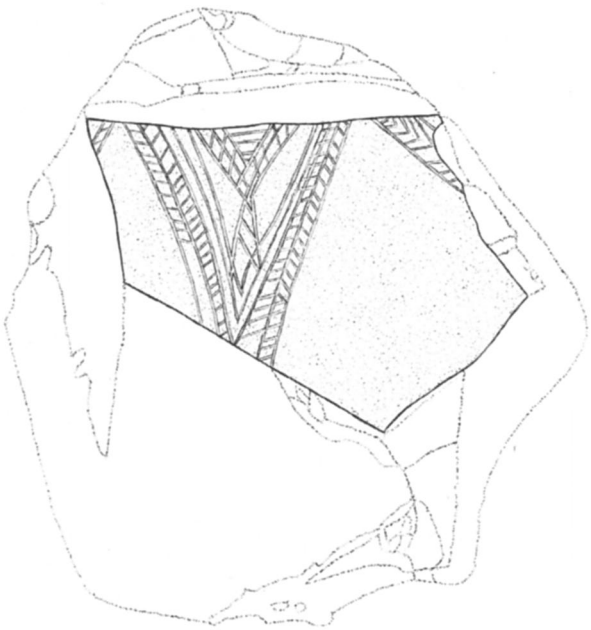

Figure 16. A fragment of slate with thunderbird design from Pond Island, Blue Hill Bay, Maine. Drawing by T. Fitzpatrick after Hedden 1991:42.

Figure 17 (left). Incised thunderbird and abstract symbols on a blocked end tube pipe from Swanton, Vermont. Drawing by T. Fitzpatrick after Willoughby 1935.

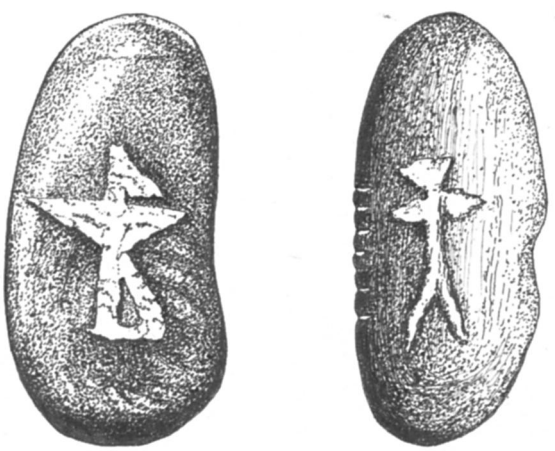

Figure 18. Thunderbird figures on pebbles found at the Wapanucket site, Assawompsett Lake, Middleborough, Massachusetts. Drawing by T. Fitzpatrick.

This most extraordinary artifact recovered from the Swanton site was a blocked-end tubular pipe made from steatite that contained an incised figure of a thunderbird. Below the thunderbird image are three abstract symbols (Figure 17). The Swanton site dates to 2000 - 3000 years ago (Lenik 2002:111-112).

Two pebbles, each containing a pecked image of a thunderbird, were recovered during archaeological excavations at the Wapanucket site located on Assawompset Lake, Middleborough, Massachusetts (Lenik 2002:125-126). Each figure is represented with its head turned to the side and wings extended (Figure 18). These artifacts date to the Late Archaic period and may have served as a shaman's magical or ritual charm stones presumably carried in a small medicine bag.

A pentagonal-shaped pendant containing a thunderbird figure was found by a relic collector on a site located somewhere along the Taunton River in southeastern Massachusetts (Taylor 2008 69(2):64-65). Referred to as the Hammond petroglyph, the name of its finder, the pendant was produced from what appears to be a naturally-shaped piece of reddish brown slate. It has a single suspension hole near its upper end. On the obverse side of the stone is a vertically oriented fine-line incised image of a thunderbird. Its head is turned to the side, its wings are outstretched downward, and it has a forked tail. The reverse side has a triangular, somewhat ladder-like, geometric motif (Figure 19).

Sylvester Manor is located on Shelter Island at the eastern end of Suffolk County, Long Island, New York. It is the site of a seventeenth-century Dutch provisioning plantation established in 1652. In the seventeenth century the residents of the plantation included Dutch, English, Native Americans and enslaved Africans. Beginning in the summer of 1998, nine seasons of field excavations were conducted at Sylvester

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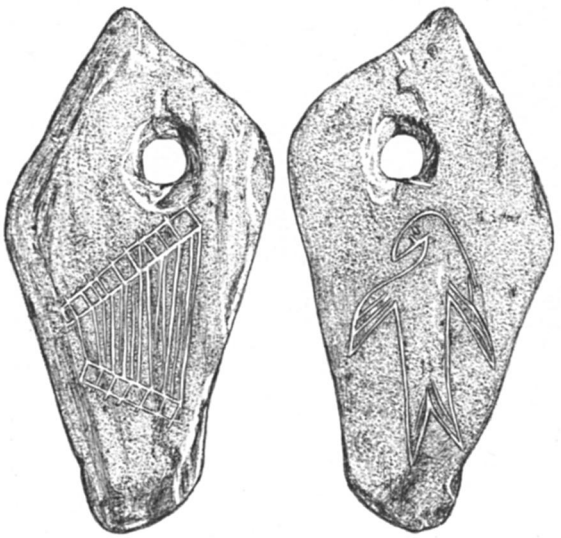

Figure 19. Incised thunderbird and geometric design on a pendant from southeastern Massachusetts. Drawing by T. Fitzpatrick after Taylor 2008 69(2):64.

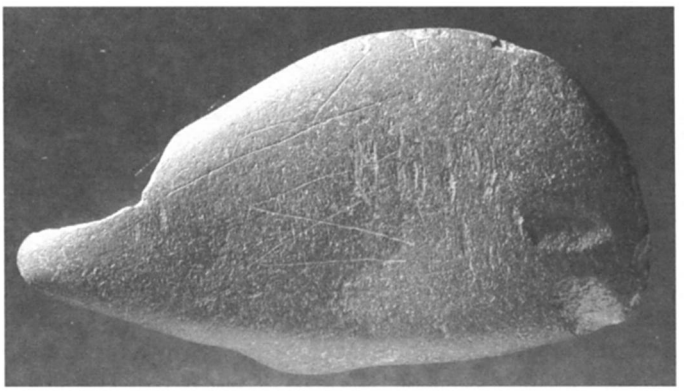

Figure 20. Cobble with incised thunderbird from Sylvester Manor site, Shelter Island, New York. Courtesy of Council For Northeast Historical Archaeology and Dennis Piechota.

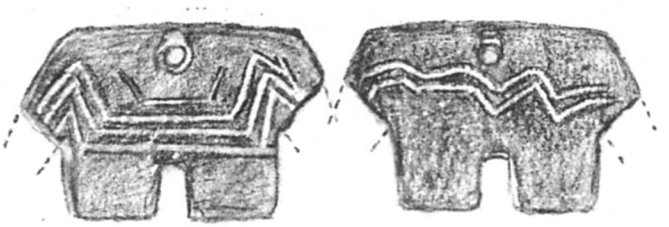

Figure 21. Carved pendant representing a thunderbird from the Havins site, Vernon Township, New Jersey. From actual specimen, enhanced rubbing by T. Fitzpatrick.

Manor by archaeologists from the University of Massachusetts Boston. Two pre-Contact Native American habitation areas as well as extensive evidence of Sylvester family ownership from 1652 to 1735 were uncovered at the site. Numerous artifacts were recovered from the site, including architectural items, European-made ceramics and clay tobacco pipes, Native American ceramics, trade items and European materials reused by Native Americans, lithic material, botanical remains and zooarchaeological specimens (Hayes and Mrozowski 2007).

Among the thousands of artifacts recovered was a smooth quartzite cobble measuring nine centimeters (3½ inches) in length, containing an incised image of a thunderbird (Figure 20). It was recovered from a midden located in the south lawn of the manor. Also, an altered and cut Spanish silver "cob" or "expediently minted coin" was found in the same midden in the south lawn of the manor. An incised thunderbird design was present on one side of this fragmentary coin. Jack Gary (2007:106-107), material culture analyst, has suggested that the similarity of the images on both objects may have been produced by the same individual and "indicates a continuation of traditional Native American symbolic practice in Sylvester Manor's 17th century colonial contexts."

A carved stone pendant representing a thunderbird was recovered from the Havins site located on the Wallkill River in Vernon Township, New Jersey. The pendant is headless and has a drilled hole for suspension (Figure 21). Remnants of the bird's wings are present and visible, the rest apparently broken off and missing. There are three parallel and zig-zag lines incised on one side of the pendant possibly to represent lightning bolts. There are two similar lines on the reverse side. A shallow incised line has been cut into the bottom of each leg. The pendant was found in association with pottery fragments of the Late Woodland-Ceramic period.

METAL THUNDERBIRD FIGURES

Two copper cutouts in the shape of thunderbirds were recovered from the Smyth site located on the east side of the Merrimack River overlooking Amoskeag Falls, Manchester, New Hampshire. The first one found was reported by Charles C. Willoughby (1935:234, 242) in his Book, *Antiquities of the New England Indians*.

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Figure 22. Copper thunderbird from the Smyth site, Amoskeag Falls, Manchester, New Hampshire. Source: Bouck and Richardson, 2007.

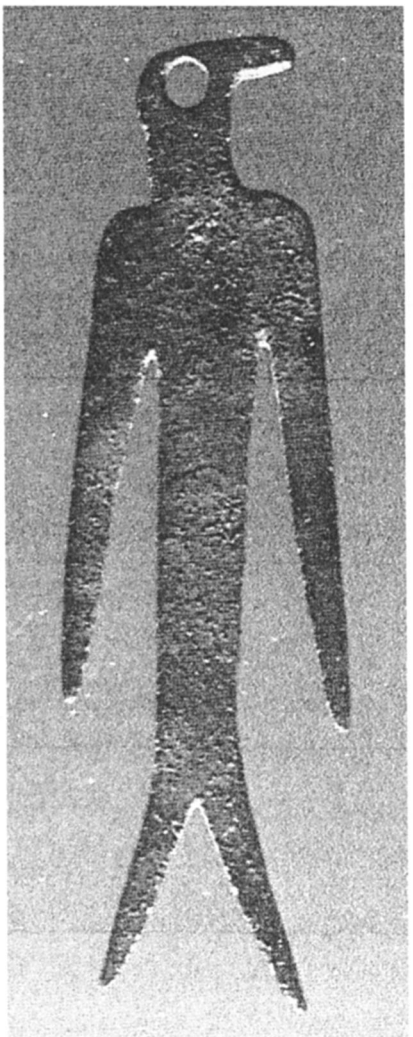

Figure 23 (left). Copper thunderbird from the Smyth site, Amoskeag Falls, Manchester, New Hampshire. Photo by R. Boisvert.

This copper cutout has two suspension holes located just below the figure's head and functioned as a gorget or pendant. The figure has a triangular head but with slightly excurvate sides, prominent shoulders with wings extending downward, and legs spread apart (Figure 22). It measures approximately 25.4 centimeters (10 inches) in length. Willoughby indicated that it was probably made from a piece of a copper kettle and that it probably dates to the first quarter of the seventeenth century.

A second copper thunderbird pendant was found during archaeological excavations conducted at the Smyth site from 1967 to 1969. It was recovered from the uppermost stratigraphic soil layer at the site described as "topsoil" (Foster et al. 1981 22(2): 41). This thunderbird pendant measures 8.7 centimeters (3.45 inches) in length. It has a suspension hole within its head, and its head and beak is turned to the side. It has a slim body, long and narrow wings, and short spread-apart legs forming an inverted V (Figure 23). It is slightly decorated with fine cross hatched lines. It also dates to the Historic Contact period. A third copper thunderbird was recovered from the surface of the Vernon Oxbow site in Vermont, and is similar to the one excavated from the Smyth site (Duncan 2011:26).

The Pahaquarra site is located on the east bank of the Delaware River in Warren County, New Jersey within the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area. The site is situated on two terraces above the level of the river. Extensive evidence of Indian occupation has been found here extending from the Paleo Indian

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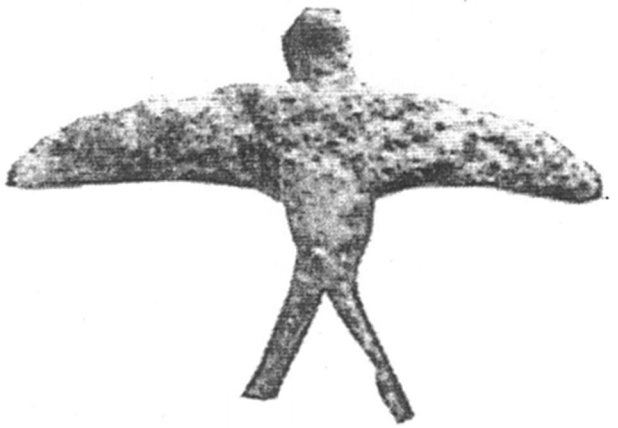

Figure 24. Pewter thunderbird from the Pahaquarra site, Warren County, New Jersey. Source: Kraft 2001:380.

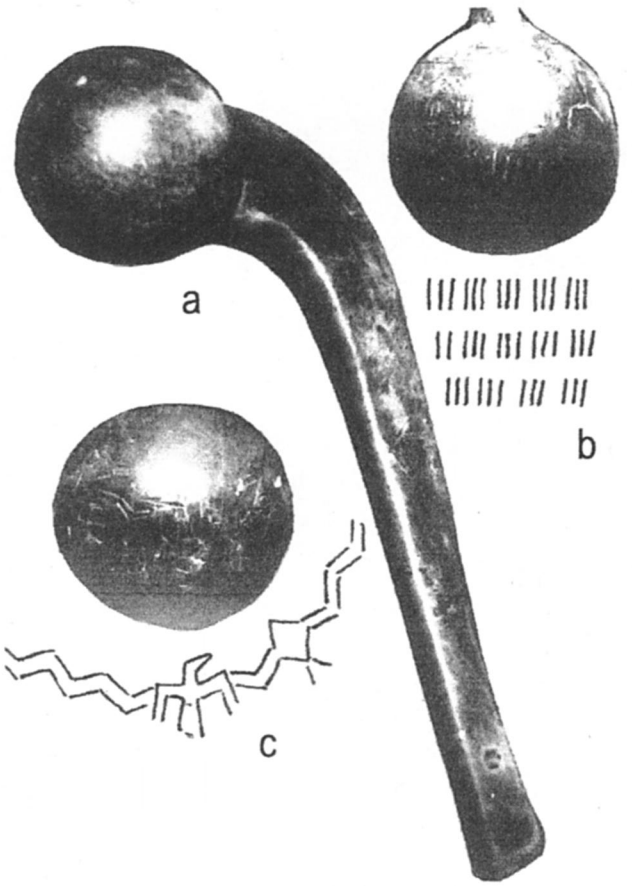

Figure 25. Ball-headed club with inserted brass/copper wedges forming a thunderbird motif. Source: Kraft 1995: 13.

Figure 26. Cast lead thunderbird figure from Lansingburgh, New York. Source: Dunn 2000:20.

period to well into the Historic Contact period. The site has been intensively excavated and surface collected over a long period of time. Artifacts and cultural features from all cultural historic periods have been recovered from the site including pits and hearths, house-patterns, prehistoric and historic period burials, and European made trade goods (see Kraft 1976).

A thunderbird figure cast from pewter was found at the Pahaquarra site by a private collector (Kraft 2001: 380, Figure 9.20d; 648). Unfortunately, its exact provenience has not been reported. The figure measures 8 centimeters (3⅛ inches) from wing tip to wing tip, and 6 centimeters (2 ⅜ inches) in height (Figure 24).

The Skokloster Castle near Uppsala, Sweden has a remarkable collection of Lenape and/or Susquehannock Indian ethnographic specimens reportedly procured from the New Sweden Colony which was situated on Delaware Bay from 1638 to 1655 (Kraft 1995 50: 1-17). Among the several items in this collection is a ball-headed war club. Archaeologist Herbert C. Kraft (Ibid 12-13) examined this specimen and reported that the face of the club contains a series of brass or copper wedges inserted into the wood that form a thunderbird image, a rhomboid figure, and parallel zig-zag rows (Figure 25).

Historian Shirley W. Dunn (2000:120) reported that a "lead figure of a swallow-tailed bird or thunderbird" (Figure 26) was recovered from an archaeological excavation of an Indian site in Lansingburgh,

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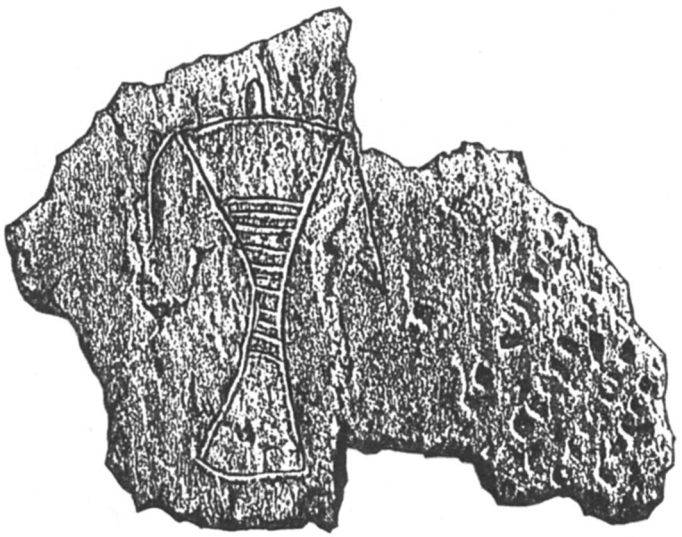

Figure 27. An incised anthropomorphic/bird-like figure on a pottery shard from the Sebonac site, Long Island, New York. Drawing by T. Fitzpatrick

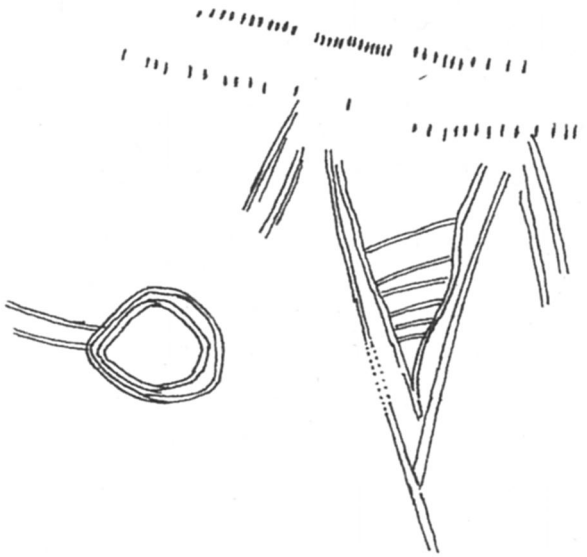

Figure 28. An incised anthropomorphic/bird-like figure on a pottery fragment from the Menemsha Pond site, Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts. Source: Hedden 1991, 31(1):45 Figure 4.

New York in 1894. This specimen is broken but its head, one wing and legs spread apart are extant which suggests to me it represents a thunderbird. Dunn described this cast figure as "tiny" and measuring "under one inch."

THUNDERBIRD FIGURES IN CLAY, SHELL, ANIMAL HIDE AND AS TATTOOS

Clay

A fragment of Indian pottery with an incised figure was recovered from excavations at the Sebonac Creek site, a Late Woodland-Ceramic period Shinnecock village on Long Island, New York. The image has a triangular body, thin waist, broad shoulders, a small oval-shaped projection representing a head and a curved tail (Figure 27). Mark E. Harrington (1977 [1924]: 40, Figure 32e, 58) interpreted this image as a thunderbird. It has both human and bird-like attributes and may represent a shaman with a special relationship to thunderbirds and the spiritual ability of out-of-body flight.

Another anthropomorph/bird-like figure incised into a pottery fragment was recovered from archaeological excavations on the east shore of Menemsha Pond, Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts in 1912-13. This image is headless and lacks shoulders. Its body and drooping arms represented by parallel lines. Five horizontal or ladder-like lines are present within the lower interior body (Figure 28). This pottery fragment is shell tempered and decorated with a cord wrapped stick impressed decorative pattern. It dates to a time between 800 AD and 1300 AD (Hedden 1991 31(1):44-45; Bouck and Richardson 2007 35:17)

Shell

The Minisink site in the upper Delaware River Valley of New Jersey has been the scene of intensive archaeological investigations for over 100 years. The site has been extensively excavated, pot-hunted, and collected by avocational and professional archaeologists and by many unknown relic hunters. The last authorized excavation of the site occurred in the years 1974-1975. This site, now designated as a National Historic Landmark, lies within the political entities of Montague and Sandyston Townships in Sussex County, New Jersey and is part of the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation area (Kraft 1993 48:73-80).

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The most intensive occupation of the Minisink site occurred during the Late Woodland-Ceramic and early Historic Contact periods. Numerous trade items of European manufacture have been recovered from the site, many of them from burials. More than 300 human burials have been found and excavated at the site by various investigators (see for example Heye and Pepper 1915; Ritchie 1949; Kraft 1978).

Sixty-six specimens of portable art have been recovered from the site. The portable art objects included pendants, decorated cobbles, pottery rim shards, tobacco pipes, gorgets, miniature water craft, shell runtees, decorated flat oval pebbles and pattern stones, and a clay maskette (Lenik 2001:208-209). Among the numerous artifacts found were four shell pendants carved to represent birds.

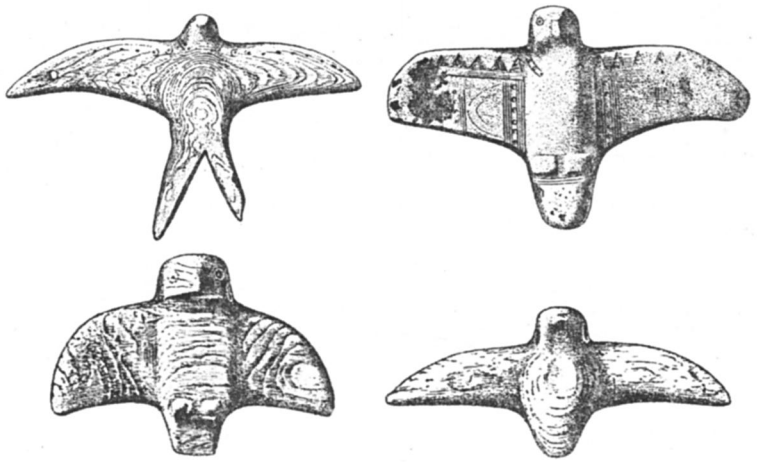

Figure 29. Shell thunderbird pendants from the Minisink site, Sussex County, New Jersey. Source: Heye and Pepper 1915:37, 38, 40.

In 1915, archaeologist Max Schrabisch reported that "two exquisitely carved ornaments of an immaculate white color representing hawks or eagles" were found in a grave at the Minisink site along with pieces of mica and zinc, a jasper scraper and 12 glass beads (Schrabisch 1915:29). Schrabisch illustrated these two artifacts in his report but failed to note the material from which they were made or their size. These two artifacts plus two other bird-like ornaments are illustrated in Heye and Pepper's (1915:37-40) excavation report on the Minisink site where they are described as bird pendants made from shell (Figure 29). All were found in burials of children. In my opinion these ornaments represent the thunderbird and date to the early Historic Contact period.

Figure 30 (above left). Seneca Iroquois shell thunderbird pendant from the Rochester Junction site, New York. Drawing by Gene MacKay.

Figure 31 (above right). Susquehannock shell figurine from eastern Pennsylvania. Source: Kent 1984:173.

A shell pendant representing a thunderbird was recovered from the Rochester Junction site in upstate New York. This sculpted figure's head faces forward, has eyes indicated by two small circular depressions, its wings are at rest along its body, and its legs are spread apart (Figure 30). This figure is attributed to the Seneca Iroquois and dates to circa 1675 to 1687 (Hayes 1988:60, 61). This specimen is curated at the Rochester Museum and Science Center.

Another shell figure with anthropomorphic and bird-like attributes was recovered from a Susquehannock Indian site in the Susquehanna River Valley of eastern Pennsylvania (Kent 1984:173). It is beautifully carved with its head facing forward, eyes and beak indicated, a triangular body, wings at rest along its body, legs spread apart, and decorated with a necklace and belt around its waist (Figure 31). With its human and bird-like features, it suggests to me that it may represent a therianthrope, a combination shaman/thunderbird being.

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Figure 32. Thunderbird image on cover of a daybook (1780-1785) in Martha's Vineyard Museum, Massachusetts. Drawing by T. Fitzpatrick.

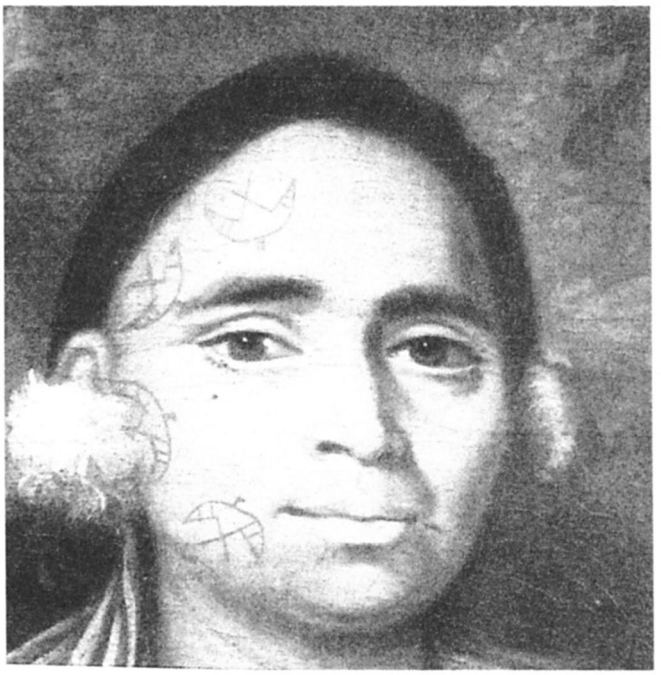

Figure 33. Head detail of a 1710 portrait of Mohican chief Etowaukun by Jan Verelst. Note four thunderbird tattoos on face. Source: Brasser 1978:202.

Animal Hide

A thunderbird figure appears on the cover of a daybook or account book kept by Matthew Mayhew between 1780 and 1785. Matthew Mayhew, a boat builder, was a direct descendant of Mayhew family missionaries who established an English colony on the island of Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts for the purpose of Christianizing the Wampanoag Indians living on the island. The Mayhew daybook is curated at the Martha's Vineyard Museum (Bouck and Richardson 2007 35:11-19).

The thunderbird figure is "impressed" into the daybook cover which is made of "animal hide." Most of the thunderbird image appears on the back cover of the daybook; one wing extends onto the front cover. The head of the bird, which has a beak, is turned to the side. Its wings are extended and feathers are indicated by impressed lines within each wing. Its body is triangular and its legs are spread apart (Figure 32). There appears to be two "talons" projecting horizontally from the lower end of the body. The thunderbird image measures 32 centimeters (12½ inches) from wing tip to wing tip and 23 centimeters (9 inches) in height. It dates to "at least 1780" (Bouck and Richardson 2007 35:14, 18).

Facial Tattoos

According to ethnohistoric accounts, Iroquois and Mohican Indians in the upper Hudson River Valley of New York and in New Jersey adorned their bodies with facial tattoos (Heckewelder 1881:206; Van der Donck 1968:39). For example, a portrait of a Mohican chief named Etowaukum, painted in 1710 by Jan Verelst, shows four images of thunderbirds on his face (Figure 33).

Another example is a portrait of a Delaware Indian chief, Lapawinsoe, painted by Gustavus Hesselius in 1735 which shows two thunderbirds and a snake or serpent tattooed on his forehead (Figure 34). Clearly, the thunderbird was viewed as a powerful spirit being and perhaps an "active and swift-footed warrior" (Schoolcraft 1851 I: 402). Tattooing of the body conveyed visible information about the person and their beliefs.

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RETROSPECTIVE SUMMARY AND INTERPRETATIONS

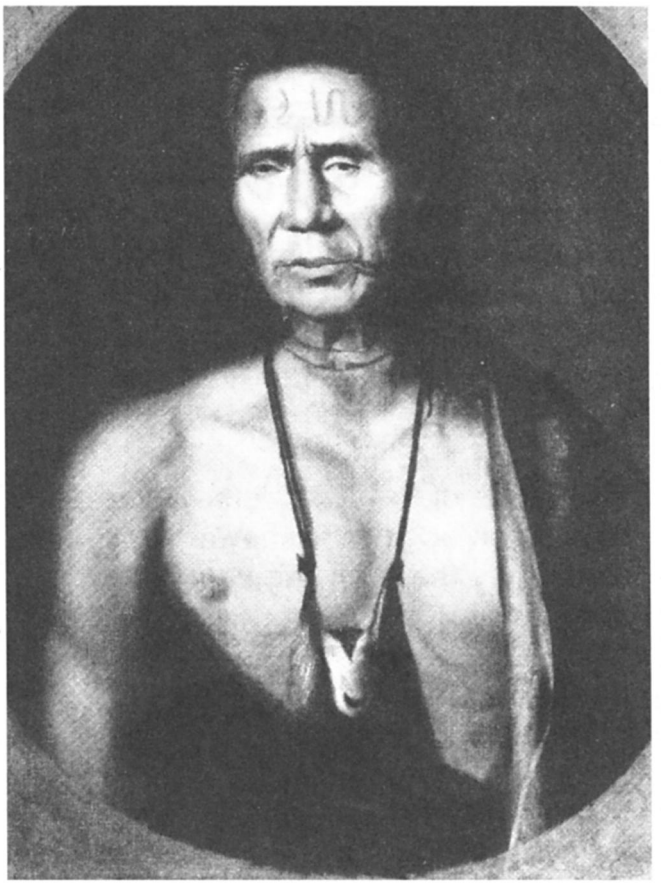

Figure 34. Portrait of Lappawinsoe, a Lenape elder, by Gustavus Hesselius, 1735.

Thunderbird figures and symbols have been found and recorded in large numbers along the Northwest Coast and Columbia Plateau in the west, throughout the Great Plains, around the Great Lakes, in southeastern and maritime Canada, and in the northeastern United States (e.g. Mallery 1893; Keyser 1992; Callahan 2001). The thunderbird motif has been expressed on rock surfaces, in wood, fabric, shell, clay, earth effigy mounds in the shape of birds, and in Historic Contact times in European-made materials. The thunderbird motif has a long temporal span extending from the Woodland-Ceramic period (3000 B.P. to 400 B.P.) into the Historic Contact period (A.D. 1500-1800) and well into the twentieth century. In post Historic Contact times, for example, the thunderbird design was considered sacred by the Ojibwa of northern Minnesota and used in birch bark scrolls and mnemonic songs in the nineteenth century and in decorative arts in the twentieth century (see Coleman 1947).

The distribution of thunderbird figures on non-portable and portable rock surfaces in the Northeast region extends from Nova Scotia and southeastern Ontario, Canada through New England, New York, New Jersey, to the lower Susquehanna River Valley in Pennsylvania. None have been reported in eastern Quebec, Canada, in New Hampshire and Connecticut. Rock paintings or pictographs are extremely rare in the Northeast Woodlands but one site in southwestern Maine appears to have several images of thunderbirds. In terms of their frequency on non-portable rock surfaces, the largest concentration of thunderbird glyphs occurs at the Safe Harbor site on the Susquehanna River in Pennsylvania.

All of the thunderbird figures on non-portable rock surfaces reported in this study are located on rivers or streams and bays. Such bodies of water often evoked awe and fear since unknown creatures may lurk beneath their depths. Snakes and serpentine creatures were perceived as dangerous to humans and the thunderbird was seen as a powerful guardian spirit in mortal combat against these malevolent creatures.

In addition to thunderbird glyphs on stone, these figures were also made of other materials. Thunderbirds appear in the archaeological record as copper cutouts, castings in pewter and lead, formed from brass or copper wedges, fashioned from shell, incised into clay, impressed into animal hide, and as body tattoos. All of these non-stone specimens reported in this study date to the Historic Contact period. Among the Algonkian tribes of the upper Great Lakes where copper was abundant in that area, the Ojibwa considered it to be a sacred and powerful mineral (Smith 1995:111). I suggest that the copper cutouts of thunderbirds recovered from the Smyth site in Manchester, New Hampshire, and the Vernon Oxbow site in Vermont, drew their meaning and power from this traditional Indian belief.

The thunderbird images collected for this paper cannot be taken as the sum total of such images in the Northeast, but as a representation of that total. The array is governed by happenstance of discovery and preservation and by collectors' taste. Still, some observations can be made in terms of portrayals of this mythic creature, including design factors and image associations.

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Design Factors

Most images, both portable and non-portable, are shown straight on with wings spread and tail feathers parted as if they were legs. In most two-dimensional or flat representations the head is shown in profile, turned either to the left or to the right. In most images sculpted in the round or three-dimensional the head is not turned, but presented straight on. In some images the parted-tail becomes so leg-like, that the image becomes a man-bird figure which seems to speak of shaman-like out of body flight and identification with this mythic creature of the air. Some images show no parting of the tail feathers. Other images emphasize the spreading of the wings as birds appear overhead in the sky. Some images reduce the thunderbird's body to geometric shapes, predominantly triangles or Xs. Some images include internal patterns, perhaps representing feathers. A few images are shown in profile with wings close to the body at rest. Snakes or serpents are often reduced to abstract images or zigzag lines. These same motifs can represent lightning.

These variations may reflect individual makers' design sense as much as regional and tribal interpretations and traditions. They may have significance of meaning or may reflect the artists' skill and response to the material.

Image Associations

Thunderbird images are often found with snake or serpent images, especially on non-portable rock art sites, where serpents outnumber thunderbirds. Thunderbird images are also often found with human images and other animal images. Thunderbirds are often found with bird track images and at least one story tells how thunderbirds made the "turkey-tracks" in stone. The non-portable rock art sites where thunderbird images have been found in the Northeast are all near water. Portable thunderbird images seem to relate to individuals in that they are on small items that can be carried. None we have seen are on items that cannot be worn on a string or carried in a pouch except, perhaps, for those on shards of ceramic pots, assuming they were made on the pot, not carved on the shard.

As I noted earlier, no thunderbird images have been reported in the State of Connecticut. However, Frank G. Speck (1909: 203) recorded a nineteenth-century folktale among the Mohegan Indians that described a "devil bird" thought to have something to do with thunder. This tale suggests to me that Indian belief in thunderbirds continued in this section of southern New England.

In conclusion, the thunderbird maintained an important position in the art, artifacts and mythology of many Northeastern Native American peoples. The examples presented in this study represent a diverse, rich, and broad artistic cultural tradition of Indian peoples in this region.

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